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SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [AF](#) [IR](#) [GG](#) [RS](#)  
SUBJECT: MEDVEDEV'S MEETINGS WITH IRANIAN AND AFGHAN  
PRESIDENTS AT THE SCO SUMMIT

REF: MOSCOW 2618

Classified By: Political M/C Alice G. Wells for reasons 1.4 (b/d).

11. (C) MFA Afghan Desk Chief Yuri Kholkhov shared with us his insights on Medvedev's August 28 meetings with Iranian President Ahmadinejad and Afghan President Karzai on the margins of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) summit in Dushanbe, during which Kholkhov served as Medvedev's Persian translator:

-- Although this was the first meeting for Medvedev and Ahmadinejad, they met for 90 minutes and discussed a range of issues in depth. Medvedev presented the Russian position on Georgia, with Ahmadinejad responding that Iran supported Russia's decision to meet Georgian aggression but would not recognize Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Kholkhov commented that the GOR understood that Iran, like other countries, had concerns about restive regions of its own and would not seek to stir up trouble by recognizing the breakaway Georgian regions (reftel). Ahmadinejad expressed Iran's desire to play a greater role in the Caucasus, including becoming a member of Turkey's proposed Caucasus stability platform. Discussion of the Iranian nuclear program was limited, with no commentary on the potential impact of the Georgian crisis on international efforts to curb Iran's nuclear ambitions. A great deal of time was spent on regional and bilateral issues, particularly expanding security and energy cooperation in the Caspian Sea region and expanding bilateral trade. Kholkhov offered that Ahmadinejad appeared more pragmatic than typically portrayed in the media, and thought his demeanor suggested someone who had matured from the "hothead" who publicly threatened to wipe out Israel.

-- Medvedev and Karzai's meeting was a largely introductory affair lasting approximately 30 to 40 minutes. The Presidents' discussion focused largely on bilateral issues, such as expanding economic ties. Medvedev expressed interest in Afghanistan's next Presidential election, with Karzai saying he would be a candidate. Medvedev thanked Karzai for his invitation to visit Afghanistan without making a commitment to go. Kholkhov doubted Medvedev would travel to Afghanistan in the near future, considering the limited bilateral ties that are handled at the ministerial level. Afghan DefMin Wardek agreed to visit Moscow, possibly in October.

12. (C) Kholkhov said that Medvedev discussed Russian suspicions about electronic equipment found in Abkhazia and South Ossetia with other leaders during the SCO summit. Medvedev described for them a Russian MOD report that claimed the equipment was beyond the needs or capabilities of the Georgian military and speculated that it was intended for possible use by American military personnel. Kholkhov said that the report, which he had not seen himself, did not suggest that U.S. personnel were on the ground in Abkhazia

and South Ossetia during the recent hostilities, but that the equipment could have been used in the event that the U.S. planned to use Georgia as a platform to attack Iran. (Note: Georgian Charge Shugarov told us that DFM Karasin levied the same charge in an August 18 meeting.)

BEYRLE